Fesch was one, became dependent on the state in support and allegiance. By the laws of 1790 the old diocesan boundaries were wiped out, bishops and priests were chosen by the people, and the celibacy of the clergy was abolished. In consequence, there had at first been bitter resistance and stern repression. But during the last years of the Directory both liberty of conscience and freedom of religion reigned in theory throughout France. There was, however, continuous social disturbance, bickering between sectaries both Christian and infidel, license of speech and conduct; in short, a condition pregnant with possibilities of disaster. Napoleon passed through a stage of rampant unbelief in his youth, and wrote a thesis in which he compared the Saviour unfavorably with Apollonius of Tyana. But with advancing years the dimensions of the papacy impressed his imagination, while ripening political wisdom convinced him of its power. As his ambitions became dominant he defied the Directory, and in 1797 left standing the framework of the papal edifice, because he already saw that the French people had returned to papal allegiance. In spite of the course imposed upon him by the events of Fructidor, he understood that no reunion of all elements in the population was possible except under the favor of Rome.

Shortly after Bonaparte's inauguration as First Consul there began to be circulated a moving tale of how the great man was frequently and visibly affected as he listened to the village chimes from his windows at Mahnaison, evidently recalling the hallowed influences of his mother's faith. The act of the Consulate in ordering the performance of funeral obsequies for Pius VI was a recognition of the popular movement. After an interregnum of eight months a new pope, Pius VII, was elected at Venice on March thirteenth,